

Selecting a Baseball & Softball Bat

Baseball is one of the most popular and competitive sports in the world. With this status, comes the need for the right equipment and training for that skillful edge. Selecting a baseball bat is an individual choice, but it doesn't have to be complicated. There are a few factors to consider for finding the perfect bat. Whichever one you choose, make sure it adheres to league requirements for your division. Check with your coach or local league association for details.

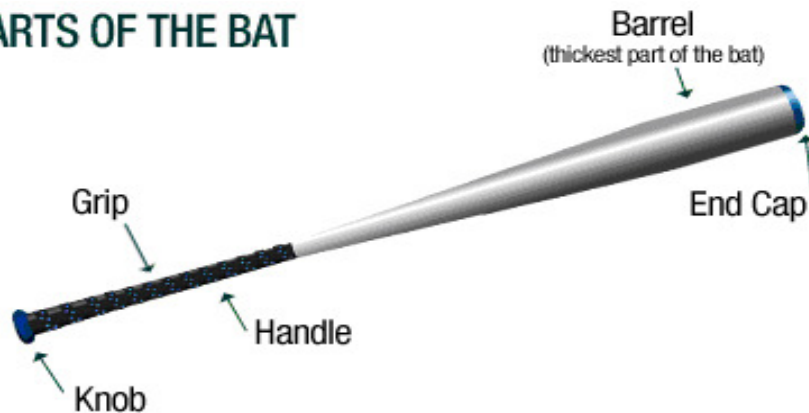
The true athlete is the prepared athlete and Dick's Sporting Goods is dedicated to winning with all levels of athletes. Even the pros understand the importance of superior equipment. This tool will help with an understanding of bat construction, bat materials and establish which league you are in to find bats for your level of play.

Links to Bat Information by Player			
Youth	Adult	Fastpitch	Slow Pitch
Bat Materials	Bat Materials	Bat Materials	Bat Materials
Regulations	Regulations	Regulations	Regulations
Frequently Asked Questions			

Covering the Basics Understanding Bat Construction

Even in America's oldest pastime, enhanced craftsmanship is vital. Dick's Sporting Goods, is constantly doing research to find the perfect blend between improved features and technologies, while staying true to sports traditions and rich histories.

PARTS OF THE BAT



Barrel Size

- The measurement of the diameter around the bat.
 - Generally, the longer the barrel the larger the "sweet spot" for making substantial contact.
- Many players prefer a smaller barrel diameter that lightens the weight and provides more swing speed.
 - Barrel size varies by league.

Grip

- The grip is simply the covering that bat manufacturers use on the handle of aluminum, wood and composite bats.
 - Rubber grips absorb more of the shock when the ball makes contact with the bat.
 - Leather or synthetic leather grips give a strengthened feel for a more confident grip.
 - Some bats come with a special cushioned grip to decrease bat vibration even more.

Drop

- Also known as a bat's length-to-weight ratio or a bat's minus (-) number, i.e. -3, -5, -10, etc.
- Defined as a negative number denoting the amount of ounces the bat weighs less than the amount of inches its length. Basically stated, it's the difference between the weight of the bat minus the length of the bat.
 - Wood bats and Slow Pitch bats are not identified with a drop.
- Different leagues have different drops legal for play. Check with your coach or local league.

Selecting a Bat by Age or by Length and Weight

Selecting the correct bat weight really depends on two critical factors: your strength and hitting style. It also depends a lot on your personal preference in weight and length, so the following are simply guidelines to follow:

- Bigger, stronger players generally prefer a heavier bat since they get the benefits of substantial swing power and ball-carrying distance.
 - Smaller players looking more for groundball hitting through the infield should consider a lighter bat to generate a quicker swing.
- Younger players should think about starting out with a lighter bat, where they can practice their stance, batting form, and running out base hits.

BY HEIGHT & WEIGHT:

BY AGE:		BY HEIGHT & WEIGHT:										
YOUR AGE	BAT LENGTH	WEIGHT (POUNDS)	HEIGHT (INCHES)									
		< 36	36-40	41-44	45-48	49-52	53-56	57-60	61-64	65-68	69-72	73+
		< 60	24-25"	26"	27"	28"	29"	29"				
		61-70		27"	27"	28"	29"	30"	30"			
		71-80			28"	28"	29"	30"	30"	31"		
		81-90			28"	29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	32"	
		91-100			28"	29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"	
		101-110			29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"	
		111-120			29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"	
		121-130			29"	29"	30"	30"	31"	32"	33"	33"
		131-140			29"	30"	30"	31"	31"	32"	33"	33"
		141-150				30"	30"	31"	31"	32"	33"	33"
		151-160				30"	31"	31"	32"	32"	33"	33"
		161-170					31"	31"	32"	32"	33"	33"
		171-180							32"	33"	33"	34"
		180+								33"	33"	34"

YOUTH BATS

When searching for the perfect bat, size matters. This is also an important step for promoting player safety. Youths starting out in the game need to be able to work on their form, technique, and batting stance. To do this, it's important to tailor the bat to fit their specific needs.

Tips for Beginners

- Lightweight alloy bats increase the size of the "sweet spot" on the barrel that allows for solid contact.
 - A starting player needs to learn to hit close to the "sweet spot."
 - Go for a lighter bat to maintain bat speed, which is top priority in hitting.
 - Have a light enough bat to swing with enough bat speed to hit the ball powerfully.
 - If they cannot hold the bat for 20 seconds without the arm starting to shake, it's too heavy.
- You'll see right away which ones are too small, too big, or too heavy. If your youth needs to slide his hands up from the knob end of the bat to give him more control, then go to the next inch-size down.
- It's the younger players who need more guidance to ensure they're swinging the right bat for their size, strength, and skill level.

Understanding Bat Materials for Youth Bats

Dick's Sporting Goods carries a vast assortment of brands, each with their own technologies, unique characteristics, and advantages for today's players. We are here to help you achieve success through passion for sports and our focus on performance, not trends.

Composite:

- Industry leading technology provides the best balance and largest sweet spot among all bat categories
 - Make sure to review your league bat regulations to determine legality of composite bats
 - Offer seamless balance and a controlled swinging motion

Performance alloy:

- Stronger alloys allow for thinner bat walls and improved "pop" off of the bat
 - Material is strategically placed for a more balanced feel
 - A larger sweet spot than basic alloy bats
 - Thinner alloys are more susceptible to cold weather damage

Basic alloy:

- Slightly softer alloy than performance alloy bats - that require thicker bat walls to maintain durability.
 - A consistent, mid-performance bat

Wood:

- Usually made of maple, ash, bamboo, or composite wood materials
 - The quality of the wood can determine the life of the bat
 - Required in some leagues
 - Wood bats authentic feel and sound is unparalleled
- Provides more ability for a customized swing and correct batting form

Youth League Regulations

AGES 5-6				AGES 7-8			
	Barrel Size	Alloy Barrel Approved / Drop	Composite Barrel Approved / Drop		Barrel Size	Alloy Barrel Approved / Drop	Composite Barrel Approved / Drop
Little League: T-Ball	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list	Little League: Minor	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12			-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Pony: Shetland	2-1/4" & 2-5/8"	Approved	Approved	Pony: Pinto	2-1/4" & 2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12			-5 through -12	-5 through -12
Babe Ruth: Cal Ripken	2-1/4"	Approved	Approved	Babe Ruth: Cal Ripken	2-1/4"	Approved	Approved
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12			-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Dixie: A	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list	Dixie: AA	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12			-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Dizzy Dean	2-1/4", 2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	Approved	Approved	Dizzy Dean	2-1/4", 2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12			-5 through -12	-5 through -12
USSSA	2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	with USSSA stamp	with USSSA stamp	USSSA	2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	with USSSA stamp	with USSSA stamp
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12			-5 through -12	-5 through -12
	2-1/4"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"		2-1/4"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12			-9 through -12	-9 through -12

AGES 9-10				AGES 11-12			
	Barrel Size	Alloy Barrel Approved / Drop	Composite Barrel Approved / Drop		Barrel Size	Alloy Barrel Approved / Drop	Composite Barrel Approved / Drop
Little League: Minor	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list	Little League: Major or LL	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12			-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Pony: Mustang	2-1/4" & 2-5/8"	Approved	Approved	Pony: Bronco	2-1/4" & 2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12			-5 through -12	-5 through -12
Babe Ruth: Cal Ripken	2-1/4"	Approved	Approved	Babe Ruth: Cal Ripken	2-1/4"	Approved	Approved
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12			-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Dixie: AAA	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list	Dixie: Majors	2-1/4"	Approved	Check your local league's waiver approved list
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12			-9 through -12	-9 through -12
Dizzy Dean	2-1/4", 2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	Approved	Approved	Dixie: The "O" Zone	2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12			-5 through -12	-5 through -12
USSSA	2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	with USSSA stamp	with USSSA stamp	Dizzy Dean	2-1/4", 2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12	-5 through -12			-5 through -12	-5 through -12
	2-1/4"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"	USSSA	2-5/8" & 2-3/4"	with USSSA Stamp	with USSSA Stamp
		-9 through -12	-9 through -12			-5 through -12	-5 through -12
				2-1/4"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"	Approved, "Do not require new stamp in 2012"	
					-9 through -12	-9 through -12	

AGES 13-14			
	Barrel Size	Alloy Barrel Approved / Drop	Composite Barrel Approved / Drop
Little League: Junior	2-5/8"	Approved	Must be -3 BBCOR
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	Must be -3 BBCOR
Pony: Pony	2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)
Babe Ruth: Babe Ruth	2-5/8"	Approved	Must be -3 BBCOR
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	Must be -3 BBCOR
Dixie: Boys	2-5/8"	Approved	Approved
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)
Dizzy Dean	2-5/8"	Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
USSSA	2-5/8"	with USSSA stamp unless -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		-5 through -12 (-3 must be BBCOR)	Must be -3 BBCOR
	2-1/4"	Approved "Do not require new stamp in 2012"	Approved "Do not require new stamp in 2012"
NFHS	2-5/8"	-9 through -12	-9 through -12
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR
		Must be -3 BBCOR	Must be -3 BBCOR

All league regulation standards are subject to change. Click here to shop our great selection of [Youth Bats](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What does the Minus mean? (Examples: -12, -8, -5). Always a minus number, it refers to the weight of the bat. Also referred to as the bat drop or the bat's length to weight ratio. Take the length of the bat and subtract the minus number and that is the weight. So a 33 inch bat that is -3 weighs 30 ounces. For example, if a bat weighs 29 ounces and is 32 inches long, it is said to be minus 3 ($29 - 32 = -3$).

2. What is a length to weight ratio? This is called "drop" and is a negative number denoting the amount of ounces the bat weighs less than the amount of inches its length.

For example, a 30-inch bat that weighs 20 ounces is a -10. The greatest differential commonly found is -12 for youth bats. Big Barrel / Senior League bats are -7, used in Senior Little League as well as Pony, and -5 is for High School.

3. Are bats sensitive to changes in temperature? Yes, composite and Aluminum bats, especially higher performance models with thinner walls, should not be used in temperatures below 50 degrees. Cold temperatures make the composition of the ball denser. This puts extraordinary stress on the bat walls which will result in denting. Bats may also be sensitive to very hot temperatures and should not be stored in areas that are exposed to high heat, such as car trunks.

4. Can I try out my new bat at the batting cage? You should not use your new bat in the batting cage. Batting cage balls are made of a more dense material than is used in regulation baseball or softball games and will cause denting.

5. What is metal fatigue? Bat Wall Flexion (allowing the bat walls to flex) is the desirable end result of the "Trampoline Effect," which is utilized by high-performance, thin-walled bats. Hitting the ball on the same side of the bat each time and in the same spot causes excessive flexing in the one area, and the metal will eventually fail (dent or split). Rotating the bat on each trip to the plate will help prevent damage due to metal fatigue.

6. What the difference between balanced and end loaded weight distribution? A balanced bat has an even weight distribution throughout where the end loaded has a half ounce to a whole ounce at the end of the bat.

7. What is the difference between a stiff bat and a flex bat? Flexible bats allow the bat handle to slightly bend on impact. Stiff bats allow the trampoline effect of the bat to be more effective, improving the bat and ball speed over a flex bat or a bat with no action to it, especially on the "sweet spot". The stiff bat lets the swing of the bat be more fluid in motion, which allows for smoother swing and bat speed. Flex bats have the same power when the ball is hit away from the "sweet spot".

Selecting a Baseball & Softball Glove

Athletes looking for the perfect glove can find it at Dick's Sporting Goods. We've put together a practical guide to help you understand the fundamentals and navigate through the process of buying your glove. Different gloves suit different types of players and positions, so understanding the position you play is important.

Links to Glove Sizing by Player:			
Youth	Adult	Women's & Girl's Fastpitch / Slow Pitch	Men's Slow Pitch
Frequently Asked Questions			

Covering the Fundamentals

Glove Sizing

Gloves are measured by starting at the top of the index finger of the glove and measuring down the finger, along the inside of the pocket and then out to the heel of the glove. Most gloves have the pre-measured size stamped inside where the pocket is. Typical fielding sizes range from 9" - 13".

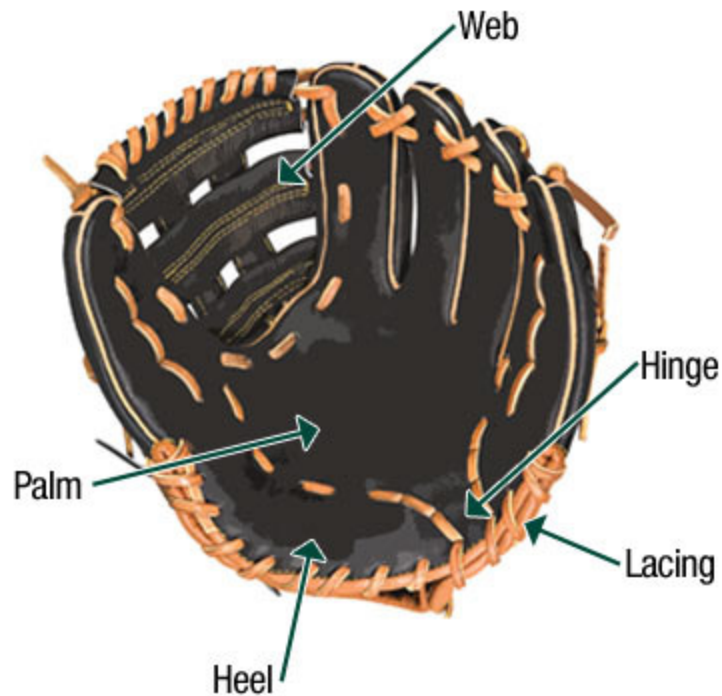
Choosing a Right Handed or Left Handed Glove

A glove is typically worn on the non-dominant hand so the dominant hand is ready to throw the ball. Purchasing a glove to fit on the left hand is called a "Right Hand Throw" while a glove that fits on the right hand is called a "Left Hand Throw", sometimes referred to as "Full Right". So a right-handed player would wear a glove on the left hand.

Understanding Glove Construction

Glove construction can appear overwhelming, but understanding the basic elements is an important step in getting the right glove for your game. Here are the key features in the craftsmanship of a glove to help you perform at your best:

PARTS OF THE GLOVE



- **Web/Pocket:** connects the fingers and the thumb allowing for secure control of the ball upon impact, features a tightly woven piece of leather that will allow the fielder to close his hand on the ball and easily maintain possession. This is where you want to catch most fly balls, pop ups and line drives. See the selecting a glove by position section for recommended web by position.
 - **Palm:** often features padding under the leather to give the palm protection.
 - **Heel:** the lower portion of the glove, palm side, which provides protection and determines the break of your glove.
- **Lacing:** provides shape to the glove, leather is the preferred lacing material allowing the laces to break in as the glove breaks in.
 - **Hinge:** allows the glove to open and close easily.
- **Wrist adjustment:** an optional feature in some gloves that allows an adjustment for the player who likes a snug fit. This is common in youth baseball, women's and girl's Fastpitch / Slow Pitch. Special features of the most popular types of wrist adjustments:
 - **D-ring fastener:** allows you to pull on the lacing and make the glove tighter or looser.
 - **Velcro fastener:** offers convenience of pulling and adjusting to fit your comfort level.
 - **Lacing adjustment:** allows you to loosen or tighten the wrist fastener with leather laces.
 - **Buckle system:** adjusts the glove with a buckle similar to an adjustable hat.

Material Options

Gloves are crafted from a variety of materials, the difference being in the quality, feel and durability. Here are some guidelines to follow:

- **Synthetic leather:** easy to close with no "break in" required and lighter for younger players.
- **Softened, oil-treated leather:** easy "break-in" and game-ready feel featuring synthetic finger stall lining.
- **Premium leather:** offers enhanced feel and durability with a more specific break in and fit.
- **Pro Series leather:** the highest quality leather, offering the elite player unparalleled, craftsmanship, durability and comfort.

Fit, Feel & Style

Although selecting the correct glove for your specific needs depends on two critical factors, your age and field position, it also depends on your personal preferences. The following are simple guidelines to follow:

- **Fit:** choose a glove that fits fairly snug. Be careful not to purchase a glove a glove too big for your hand, as it could hinder player performance.
- **Feel:** your glove should be stiff enough to give strength, yet offer the flexibility to provide control and agility.
- **Style:** choose a look and color that fits you while making sure the web pattern is right for your position.

Selecting a Glove by Position

To achieve your ultimate potential, choose a glove that's appropriate for your position on the field. Here are a few things to look for:

- Catcher: a fingerless mitt featuring heavy padding to reduce the sting from the pitcher's throw and a claw-like shape to properly catch the pitch. The special design also helps to provide a target for the pitcher.
 - Pitcher: often has closed webbing to allow pitchers to conceal their grip on the ball.
- First Base: very long and wide, specifically designed for those balls thrown in the dirt to scoop up. It is longer to help the first baseman field throws from infielders and a shallow pocket allows the first baseman to quickly retrieve the ball.
- Infield: five-fingered glove with a shallow pocket for a quick throw to the necessary base, offering open webbing so the player throws only the ball, not the dirt that was locked in the glove.
 - Outfield: deeper pocket to catch fly balls and longer glove length for more reach.

Breaking In Your Ball Glove

Here are tips for softening your glove from Wilson's® renowned master glove maker, Shigeaki Aso, who designs gloves for Major League Baseball's top pros:

- Moisten the leather. Pour a small amount of hot water (150 -170 degrees) over any area of your new glove you want to make softer. **IMPORTANT: DO NOT PUT YOUR GLOVE IN THE MICROWAVE OR USE DETERGENTS TO SOFTEN YOUR GLOVE. THIS CAN DO PERMANENT DAMAGE TO THE LEATHER.**
- Work the most rigid parts of your glove. Bend the thumb and pinky back and forth towards each other and away from each other. Squeeze the thumb and pinky together. Push the back fingers down and squeeze the palm liner. Pull the web top to stretch a little. Repeat this process 6-8 times before your glove is completely dry.
- Pound the glove. Using a wooden mallet or 5 lb neoprene dumbbell, and **WITH THE GLOVE OFF OF YOUR HAND**, pound your glove at the pocket where you would catch the ball and the area that folds when you catch the ball. Pound the web as well, creating a fold to be where you want your glove to break. Be sure to pound both the back and the palm side to speed things up. Finally, throw a baseball into the pocket 30-40 times before the glove is dry. This will further break in the pocket, while also allowing your glove to begin conforming to your hand.
- Shape the glove. Put a ball in the pocket and wrap your glove with 2-3 rubber bands. The bands should be very snug, but not tight. Allow to set for 4-5 hours then repeat step 3. This will ensure your glove will begin to take the shape you want when it dries, and not revert back to its natural shape.
- Condition the glove. Once completely dry, rub the entire glove with a high quality glove conditioner. Repeat the process of conditioning your glove 3-4 times each season and before storing for the off-season. Remember to store your glove in your house as opposed to in your garage for longer life and maintaining better condition.

Glove Maintenance

Properly caring for your baseball glove can make an enormous difference in the lifespan of your glove. Here are some helpful hints:

- Keep your glove in a cool, dry place when it is not in use.
- If your glove gets wet, dry it with a towel and let it air-dry.
- Do not over oil your glove, a couple times each season is appropriate.
 - Keep the glove laces tight.

Glove Steamer Machines

Available in select Dick's Sporting Goods stores, glove steamer machines can break in your new glove into game-ready condition within minutes. Your newly purchased glove can be steamed to soften the leather and relax the seams for a precise fit to your hand and playing style. [Click here for the list of stores currently offering this service.](#)

YOUTH GLOVES

For superior performance and success, the size of your glove matters. This is also an important step for promoting player safety. Avoid buying an oversized glove. Beginners should stick to a smaller glove for additional control. Youth glove construction provides shorter, narrower finger stalls, and tighter wrist closure for enhanced control.

Youth Sizes by Position:

T-Ball: 9" - 10"
Infield: 10" - 11.75"
Pitcher: 11.5" - 12.25"
Outfield: 11.5" - 12.25"

Shop our great selection of [Youth Gloves](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What type of glove is recommended for a beginner? Gloves should be chosen carefully. Start by selecting the correct size and webbing for the position you intend to play. Next, choose a glove that is easy to close, fits comfortably and has a game ready feel.
2. What is the difference between gloves and mitts? Catcher's and first basemen's gloves are classified as mitts whereas all other positions are classified as gloves.
3. What is the significance of the web pattern and having so many choices? Webs are designed to be position specific. Each different web option allows that player an advantage at their position.
4. What's the difference between youth, adult, women's & girl's Fastpitch / Slow Pitch and men's Slow Pitch gloves? As you can see explained throughout the guide, each level/division of sport has gloves designed specifically for the position/size of player.
5. What's the difference between youth and adult gloves? Each level and division of sport has gloves designed specifically enhance your skill level based on your position and size/age. This guide is intended to help you choose get the right glove that is best for you.
6. Do they make gloves specifically for left-hand throwers? Yes. Most all gloves come in a left or right hand option.